



# THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

## Chapter 4: The Social Dimension of Evangelization



1. Communal and social dimension of the kerygma
2. The inclusion of the poor in society
3. The common good and peace in society
4. Social dialogue as a contribution to peace



# I. COMMUNAL AND SOCIAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE KERYGMA



At the very heart  
of the Gospel  
is life in community  
and engagement  
with others.

(EG 177)



To believe in a Father who loves all men and women with an infinite love means realizing that “he thereby confers upon them an infinite dignity”.

To believe that the Son of God assumed our human flesh means that each human person has been taken up into the very heart of God.

To believe that Jesus shed his blood for us removes any doubt about the boundless love which ennobles each human being.

Our redemption has a social dimension because “God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person, but also the social relations existing between men”. (EG 178)



# A MISSION “TO ALL PEOPLE AND THE WHOLE PERSON”

God’s word teaches that our brothers and sisters are the prolongation of the incarnation for each of us:

*As you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to me.*  
(Mt 25:40). (EG 179)

The mission of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ  
has a universal destination.

Its mandate of charity encompasses  
all dimensions of existence,  
all individuals,  
all areas of community life,  
and all peoples.

Nothing human can be alien to it. (EG 181)



# MORE THAN INDIVIDUAL GESTURES

Nor should our loving response to God be seen simply as an accumulation of small personal gestures to individuals in need, a kind of “charity à la carte”, or a series of acts aimed solely at easing our conscience.

The Gospel is about *the kingdom of God* (cf. Lk 4:43); it is about loving God who reigns in our world.

To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity.

Both Christian preaching and life, then, are meant to have an impact on society. (EG 180)





An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it.....

All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world. (EG 183)



# FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES



In what follows I intend to concentrate on two great issues which strike me as fundamental at this time in history. I will treat them more fully because I believe that they will shape the future of humanity.

These issues are:

**the inclusion of the poor in society,**

**and**

**peace and social dialogue.**

**(EG 185)**



## II. THE INCLUSION OF THE POOR IN SOCIETY



### CHALLENGE OF SCRIPTURE

“How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods, and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?” (*1 Jn 3:17*)

“You yourselves give them something to eat!” (*Mk 6:37*)



# SOLIDARITY

- Something more than a few sporadic acts of generosity (EG 188)
- A new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few (EG 188)
- We know that there is enough food for everyone and hunger is the result of a poor distribution of goods and income (EG 191)
- We desire even more .. education, access to health care, and, above all, employment (EG 192)



# MERCY



- A key Scripture value (EG 193)
- Not to be relativised (EG 194)
- A key criterion of an authentic Christian community (EG 195)



# SPECIAL PLACE OF THE POOR IN GOD'S PEOPLE

- The option for the poor is a theological category (Jesus had a special love for the poor and we are called to have the same mind as was in Christ Jesus) (EG 198)
- We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voices to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them, and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them (EG 198)



# A CHALLENGE FOR ALL



No one must say that they cannot be close to the poor because their own lifestyle demands more attention to other areas.

This is an excuse commonly heard in academic, business or professional, and even ecclesial circles.... none of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice.

I trust in the openness and readiness of all Christians, and I ask you to seek, as a community, creative ways of accepting this renewed call.

(EG 201)



# “INEQUALITY IS THE ROOT OF SOCIAL ILLS”



The dignity  
of the human person  
and the pursuit  
of the common good  
are concerns which  
ought to shape  
all economic policy.  
(EG 203)



Business is a vocation, and a noble vocation (EG 203)

We can no longer trust in the unseen forces  
and the invisible hand of the market.

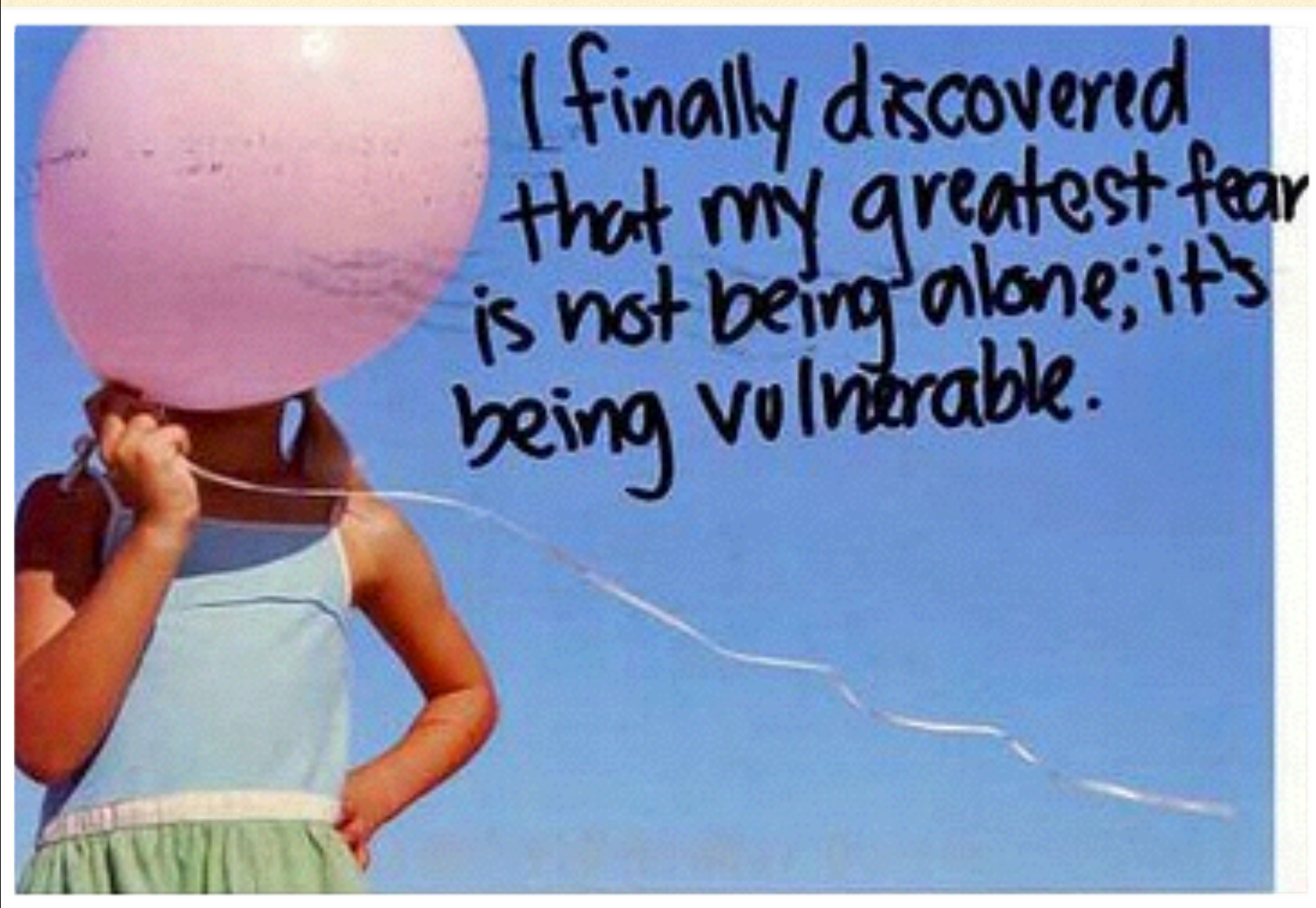
Growth in justice requires more than economic growth,  
while presupposing such growth:

it requires decisions, programmes, mechanisms and processes  
specifically geared to a better distribution of income,  
the creation of sources of employment  
and an integral promotion of the poor  
which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality  
(EG 204)

Politics, though often denigrated,  
remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity  
(EG 205)



# CONCERN FOR THE VULNERABLE



But the current [economic] model, with its emphasis on success and self-reliance, does not appear to favour an investment in efforts to help the slow, the weak or the less talented to find opportunities in life. (EG209)



# NEW FORMS OF POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY

The homeless,  
the addicted,  
refugees,  
indigenous peoples,  
the elderly,  
migrants,  
victims of human trafficking  
women excluded, mistreated and subject to violence,  
the unborn  
and  
creation as a whole





Among the vulnerable whom the Church wishes to care with particular love and concern are unborn children, the most defenceless amongst us. Attempts are made to present this position as ideological, obscurantist and conservative. It is not “progressive” to try to resolve problems by eliminating a human life.





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On the other hand it is also true that we have done little to adequately accompany woman in very difficult situations where abortion appears as a quick solution to their profound anguish.

EG 213-214



# FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Small

yet strong in the love of  
God,

like Saint Francis of Assisi,  
all of us, as Christians,

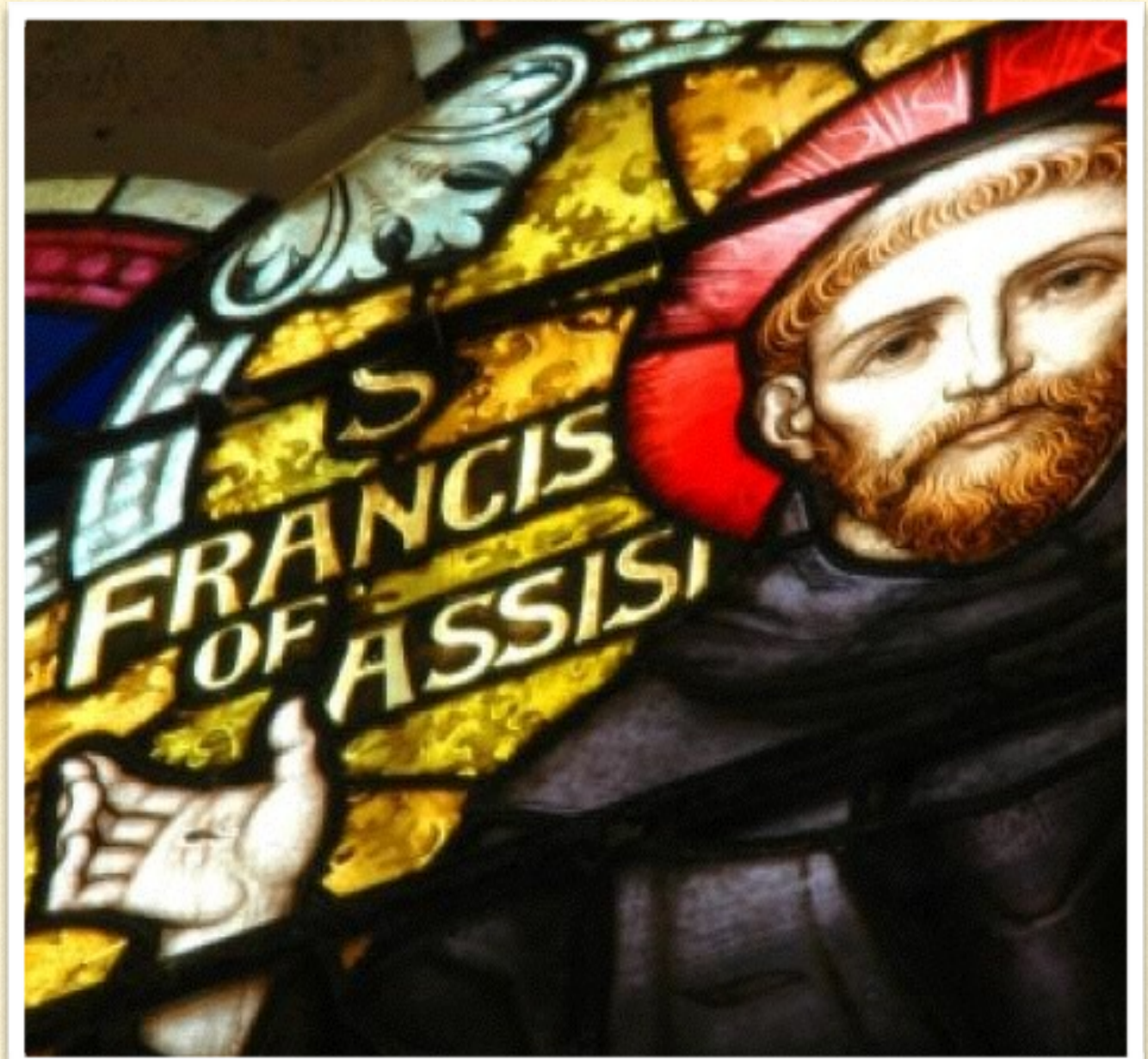
are called to watch over  
and protect

the fragile world

in which we live,

and all its peoples.

(EG 216)





# III. THE COMMON GOOD AND PEACE IN SOCIETY



Peace is **NOT** the mere absence of violence or warfare or appeasement of the poor so that the affluent can placidly support their lifestyle. (EG 217-9)

.....

: Yet becoming a *people* ..

: is an ongoing process in which every new generation must take part:

: a slow and arduous effort calling for a desire for integration

: and a willingness to achieve this

: through the growth of a peaceful and multifaceted culture of encounter.

: (EG 220)

.....



Progress in building a people in peace, justice  
and fraternity depends

on four principles:

*Time* is greater than *space*

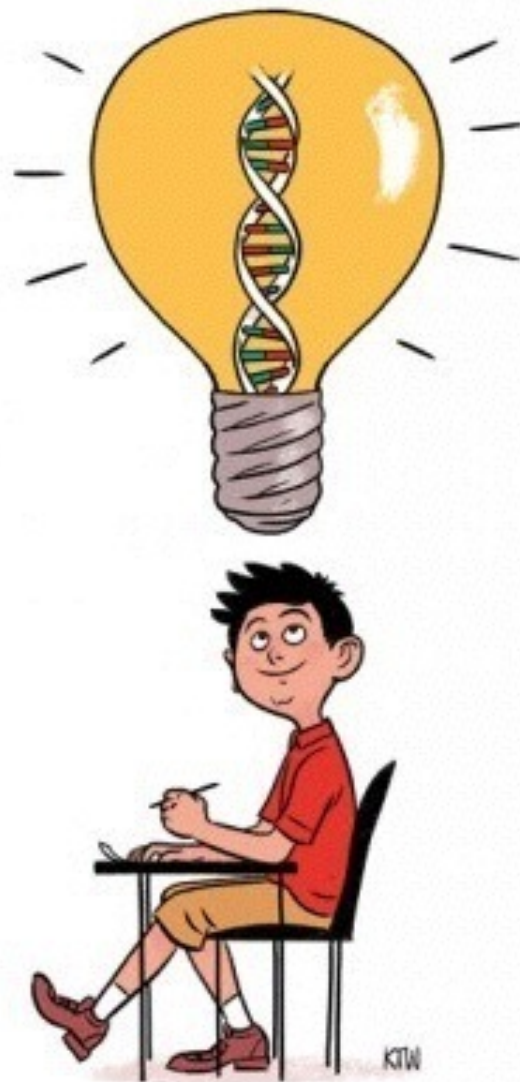
*Unity* prevails over *conflict*

*Realities* are more important than *ideas*

*The whole* is greater than *the part*



# TIME IS GREATER THAN SPACE



A good process is better than immediate results.

What we need, then, is to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events. Without anxiety, but with clear convictions and tenacity.

EG 223


(EG 223)



# UNITY PREVAILS OVER CONFLICT

Go beyond the surface of the conflict and see others in their deepest dignity (EG 228)

The message of peace is not about a negotiated settlement but rather the conviction that the unity brought by the Spirit can harmonise every diversity. It overcomes every conflict by creating a new and promising synthesis. (EG 230)



**Blessed  
are the  
Peace  
Makers**



# REALITIES ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN IDEAS



Ideas – conceptual elaborations – are at the service of communication, understanding, and praxis, capable at most of classifying and defining, but certainly not calling to action. What calls us to action are realities illuminated by reason (EG 232)

Realities are greater than ideas. This principle has to do with incarnation of the word and its being put into practice.... The principle of reality, of a word already made flesh and constantly striving to take flesh anew, is essential to evangelization. (EG 233)



# THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE PART

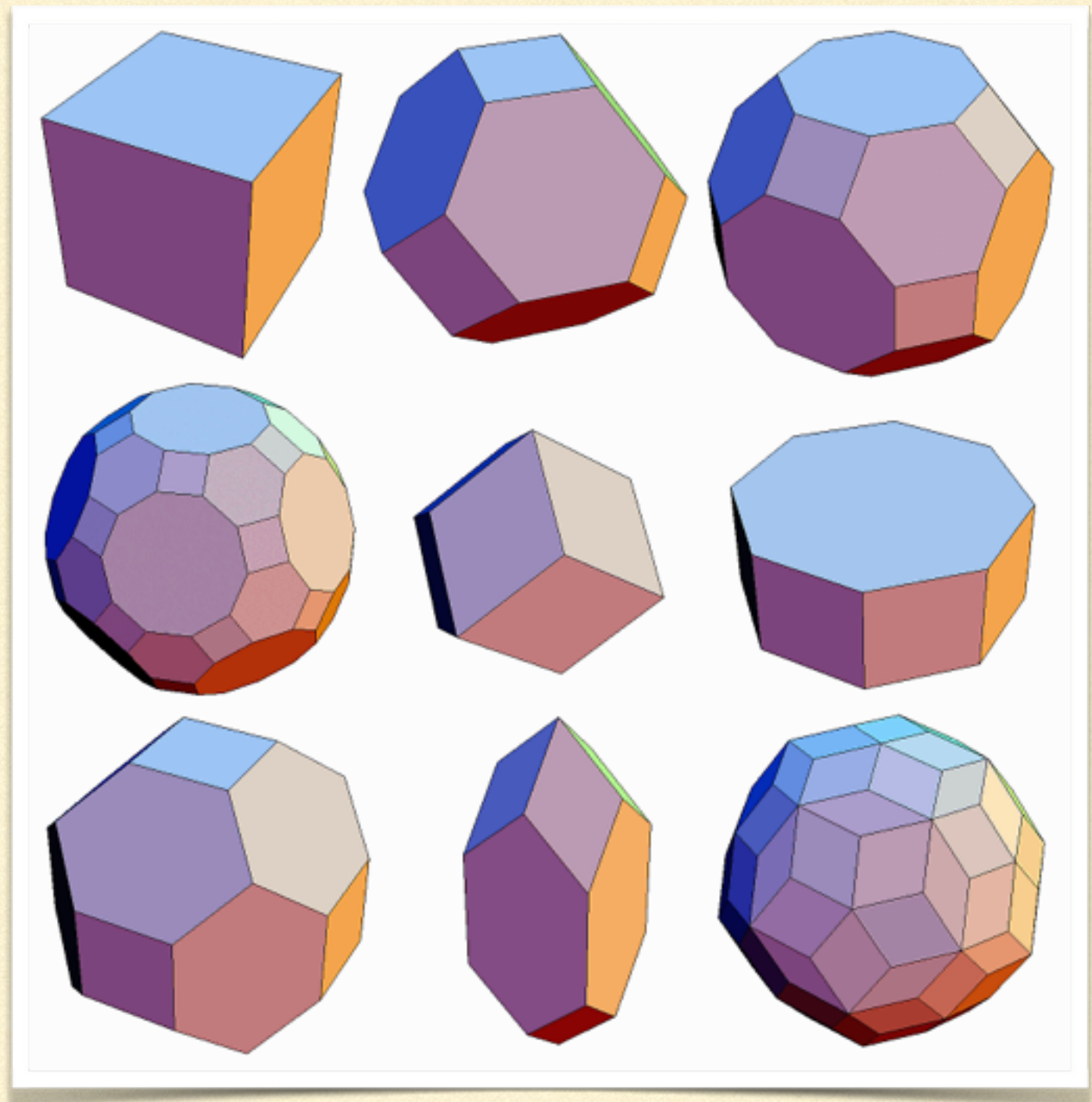
An innate tension also exists between globalization and localization. We need to pay attention to the global so as to avoid narrowness and banality. Yet we also need to look to the local, which keeps our feet on the ground. Together, the two prevent us from falling into one of two extremes. (EG 234)





# OUR MODEL IS THE POLYHEDRON

.....which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness..... It is the convergence of peoples who, within the universal order, maintain their own individuality; it is the sum total of persons within a society which pursues the common good, which truly has a place for everyone.  
(EG 236)





# IV. SOCIAL DIALOGUE AS A CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE

Evangelization involves the path of dialogue (EG 238)

We do not need plans drawn up by a few for the few, or an enlightened or outspoken minority which claims to speak for everyone. It is about agreeing to live together, a social and cultural pact.  
(EG 239)





# DIALOGUE BETWEEN FAITH, REASON AND SCIENCE

Faith is not fearful of reason; on the contrary, it seeks and trusts reason, since “the light of reason and the light of faith both come from God (EG 242)

The Church has no wish to hold back the marvellous progress of science. On the contrary, she rejoices and even delights in acknowledging the enormous potential that God has given to the human mind. Whenever the sciences – rigorously focused on their specific field of inquiry – arrive at a conclusion which reason cannot refute, faith does not contradict it. (EG 243)





# ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE



Commitment to ecumenism responds to the prayer of the Lord Jesus that “they may all be one” (Jn 17:21). (EG 244)

We must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another. This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust. (EG 246)

If we concentrate on the convictions we share, and if we keep in mind the principle of the hierarchy of truths, we will be able to progress decidedly towards common expressions of proclamation, service and witness. (EG 246)

If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! (EG 246)

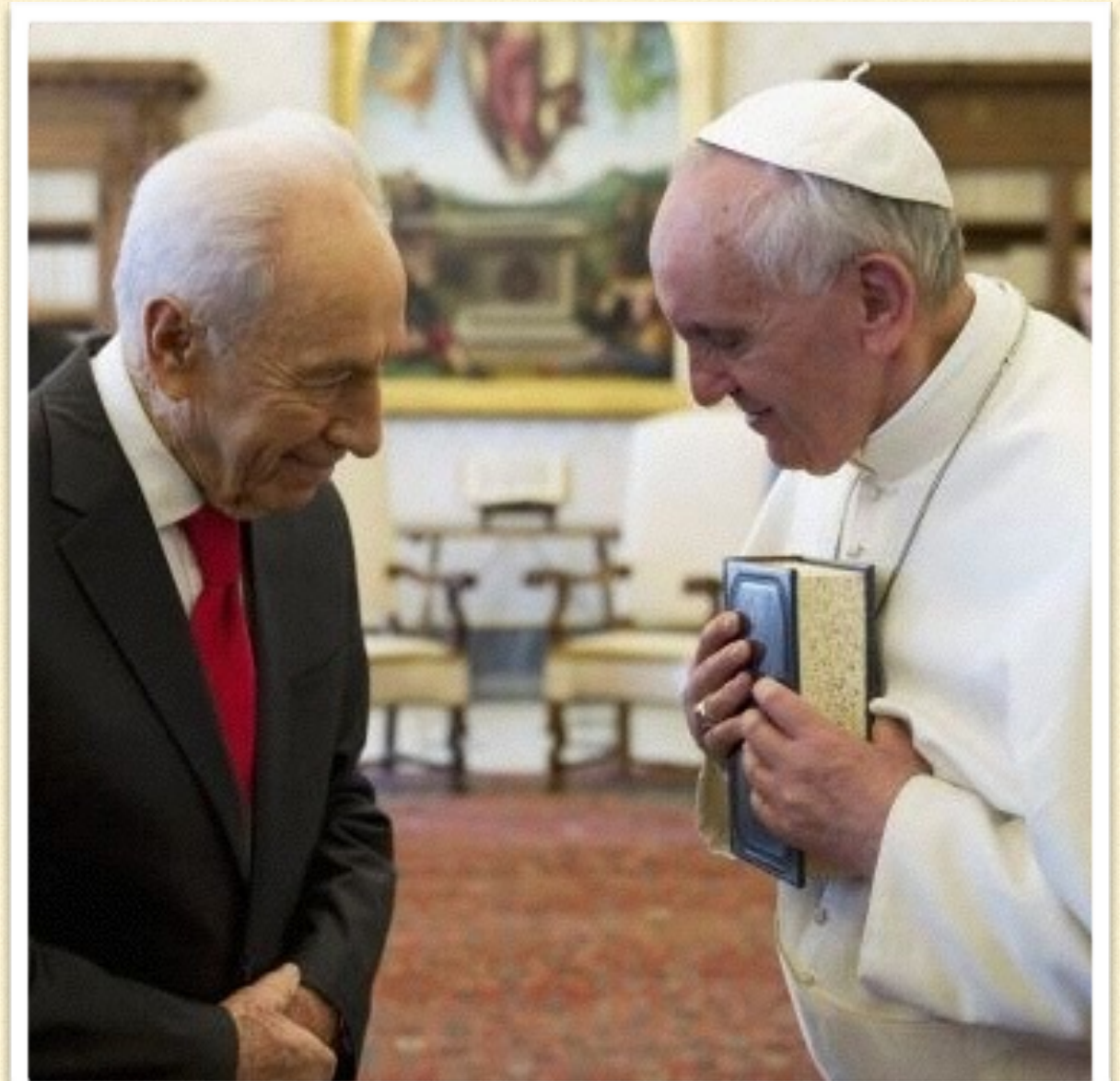


# RELATIONS WITH JUDAISM

We hold the Jewish people in special regard because their covenant with God has never been revoked, for “the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable” (*Rom 11:29*). (EG 247)

Dialogue and friendship with the children of Israel are part of the life of Jesus’ disciples. The friendship which has grown between us makes us bitterly and sincerely regret the terrible persecutions which they have endured, and continue to endure, especially those that have involved Christians. (EG 248)

While it is true that certain Christian beliefs are unacceptable to Judaism, and that the Church cannot refrain from proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Messiah, there exists as well a rich complementarity which allows us to read the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures together and to help one another to mine the riches of God’s word. (EG 249)





# INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE



**Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities (EG 250)**

**True openness involves remaining steadfast in one's deepest convictions, clear and joyful in one's own identity, while at the same time being "open to understanding those of the other party" and "knowing that dialogue can enrich each side (EG 251)**

**Plea for religious freedom in Muslim countries (EG 253)**

**The Spirit breathes everywhere (EG 254)**





A healthy pluralism, one which genuinely respects differences and values them as such, does not entail privatizing religions in an attempt to reduce them to the quiet obscurity of the individual's conscience or to relegate them to the enclosed precincts of churches, synagogues or mosques. This would represent, in effect, a new form of discrimination and authoritarianism. The respect due to the agnostic or non-believing minority should not be arbitrarily imposed in a way that silences the convictions of the believing majority or ignores the wealth of religious traditions. (EG 255)





Intellectuals and serious journalists frequently descend to crude and superficial generalizations in speaking of the shortcomings of religion, and often prove incapable of realizing that not all believers – or religious leaders – are the same. Some politicians take advantage of this confusion to justify acts of discrimination. (EG 256)