

[Pope Francis's Vision for Civic and Political Love in the Context of Care for our Common Home](#)

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[V. CIVIC AND POLITICAL LOVE

228. Care for nature is part of a lifestyle which includes the capacity for living together and communion. Jesus reminded us that we have God as our common Father and that this makes us brothers and sisters. Fraternal love can only be gratuitous; it can never be a means of repaying others for what they have done or will do for us. That is why it is possible to love our enemies. This same gratuitousness inspires us to love and accept the wind, the sun and the clouds, even though we cannot control them. In this sense, we can speak of a “universal fraternity”.

229. We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it. We have had enough of immorality and the mockery of ethics, goodness, faith and honesty. It is time to acknowledge that light-hearted superficiality has done us no good. When the foundations of social life are corroded, what ensues are battles over conflicting interests, new forms of violence and brutality, and obstacles to the growth of a genuine culture of care for the environment.

230. Saint Therese of Lisieux invites us to practice the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and

selfishness. In the end, a world of exacerbated consumption is at the same time a world which mistreats life in all its forms.

231. Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also “macro-relationships, social, economic and political ones”.[156] That is why the Church set before the world the ideal of a “civilization of love”.[157] Social love is the key to authentic development: “In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life – political, economic and cultural – must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity”.[158] In this framework, along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a “culture of care” which permeates all of society. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realize that this too is part of our spirituality, which is an exercise of charity and, as such, matures and sanctifies us.

232. Not everyone is called to engage directly in political life. Society is also enriched by a countless array of organizations which work to promote the common good and to defend the environment, whether natural or urban. Some, for example, show concern for a public place (a building, a fountain, an abandoned monument, a landscape, a square), and strive to protect, restore, improve or beautify it as something belonging to everyone. Around these community actions, relationships develop or are recovered and a new social fabric emerges. Thus, a

community can break out of the indifference induced by consumerism. These actions cultivate a shared identity, with a story which can be remembered and handed on. In this way, the world, and the quality of life of the poorest, are cared for, with a sense of solidarity which is at the same time aware that we live in a common home which God has entrusted to us. These community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences.

[156] BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009) 2: AAS 101 (2009), 642.

[157] PAUL VI, Message for the 1977 World Day of Peace: AAS 68 (1976), 709.

[158] PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 582.]

When you say the word “love” in any context, every person in the room immediately feels their experience with that word all over again whether good or bad, and most likely a specific person pops into their head. This small, four letter word carries an immense amount of weight, memories, and meaning behind it that varies from each person on the planet. Since this is something so indescribable when experienced in its truest, purest form, the experience of love itself is completely subjective to each vessel that comes across it yet we as a human race never stop attempting to put all those emotions and “indescribable” experiences into any combination of words we can (even throw a beat in the background and make it catchy). Pope Francis focuses his attention at broadening the language surrounding love, instead of rushing it to print. He expands its meaning beyond romantic or parental love, and stretches the imagination to bring that same level of intense love to everything around us as a human race. There is no limit to the love we possess and can therefore put back out into our world, and here the Pope not only

encourages us to do so, but points out just how important it is to harness all that love for a common good and common understanding of each other as not separate parts, but one whole.

As someone not familiar with the Christian faith and traditions, the connections within this piece to that vision posed a roadblock for me when interpreting. However, the Pope mentions a line in the very beginning of this chapter that caught my attention and drew many connections to the beliefs I do hold close to my heart. Pope Francis states, “Jesus reminded us that we have God as our common Father and that this makes us brothers and sisters,” (*Laudato Si*, par. 228). An artist by the name of Lorin Ashton, known more commonly by his DJ name Bassnectar, is an ever-evolving, enlightened man who uses every ounce of his success for the betterment of others and our world as a whole. He has song called “What”, in which the primary lyrics are “love one another, like sister and brother”, just as the Pope mentioned above. Lorin stresses time and time again that every beat in every song, every curated event and set he puts on is not about him as a singular person – Bassnectar is an interactive project that is the result of a community of people who love, accept, and share beautiful experiences with one another and help to create that same beauty for others. With a heavy emphasis on non-profits, donations to charities both across the country and internationally, and a never-ending passion to do good, Bassnectar and Lorin perfectly exemplify the ideas the Pope is trying to convey here. (I refer to him on a first name basis because I am a part of this great big bass family and therefore anything more formal would be unfitting and against his requests). Not only that we, as a human race, all hold a piece of the puzzle in making our world as great as it can be, but that we also are all connected to this world through each other, nature, and the love we share. Paragraph 228 also goes into explaining that the kind of love the Pope is referring to is not for personal gain whatsoever, there is no motivation to get something in return for yourself here. This love is

completely selfless and serves only to strengthen the connection between living beings, and the earth we all call home. We cannot control all things, but of the things we can, we should do everything we can to make those the very best they can be.

Pope Francis then dives into explaining how we all hold responsibility to one another, and the little moments of showing love mean and contribute more than we recognize in paragraphs 229 and 230. We've all heard the expression that "it's the little things in life that really matter" or "it's the little things that you'll remember" and I believe we never really gave that the weight it deserved because every word is true and the Pope agrees. The importance of everyday acts of love, even though small, are supercharged when they carry the truth and act as incredible tools for the common good. He also explains that ignoring our connection to one another and nature as a whole can be damning when it comes to making progress. Human beings need one another, we always have since the beginning of time and it's not a far-fetched idea to believe that together is exactly how we can fix this world we're living in. In the Greek's four types of love, I believe eros is a perfect example of the message being conveyed here. Eros is explained with a garden metaphor, in that the love cannot grow without resources to help it. The love itself can never remain permanent without constant support and work, just like the common good the Pope speaks about. We must all see our situation as this garden, we cannot survive alone without the resources of each other and the only way to make it as healthy and happy as we can we must all do our part.

Pope Francis continues on to paragraph 231, where he explains that love also holds weight in the political and social world as well. Up until now we have covered the love between humans and love for our common home, but here we focus on the ways love can be political and crucial for society's wellbeing. He makes connections to the Church, and explains that love must

remain the sole standard of everything we do in life in order to obtain the type of society worthy of such love and each other's existence. Pope Francis insists we must all change our culture to be the kind that focuses primarily on empathy and supporting each other, so that through these acts of love to one another we can connect with the calls from God and therefore better our lives. We see this exemplified clearly in *The Mission*, through Gabriel's experiences with the natives. Gabriel uses music, patience, and love to create a trustworthy relationship with the tribe. He sees this gentle way of love instead of force through violence as the best way to form a real bond, and ultimately accomplish their goal. Gabriel not only shows love for the people, but also a love for their culture and respect for their way of living, as their society has been that way since the beginning of it.

Although ample time is given to the political ways of love, there are numerous paths in which we can take to achieve a common good among each other while making spiritual connections to our larger meanings. In the last paragraph of this section, Pope Francis commends all efforts of society to make it a better place regardless of its political affiliation or organization. He provides examples of all the different ways we contribute to this larger goal, and explains that each method brings us closer to each other and that standard of communal love for all. This can be recognized through Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, where the primary message is about God's love for us and how it effects our lives. Dante shows that the will of the people belongs to us and us alone, we choose our paths in life without God's control, yet for many he is the motivation behind each and every step chosen. God does not hold this type of complete power over us, but instead gives us the guidelines to live a life closest to his vision so that we may benefit both our society and family here on earth and once we leave it. The ultimate goal is to form a society so

grounded in love for one another, our common home, and ourselves, that each and every act stem from this place of empathy and support.

Works Cited

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